



INL partnerships with economic development groups helped earn approval for the new Invest Idaho regional center, which allows foreign entrepreneurs to earn permanent U.S. residency by investing in Idaho.

INL aids in sustaining the region's economy

By [Keith Arterburn](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Economic partnerships and close collaboration among Idaho National Laboratory and the many regional economic development organizations are making significant contributions that are helping the state navigate the difficult employment and business environment.

"During the past year, our work with regional partners on business retention and expansion have paid significant dividends, retaining more than 3,000 jobs and creating about 600 more," said Nancy Bergmann, INL's economic development and technical assistance program manager. ***Business leaders learned about Invest Idaho at an INL-sponsored business networking meeting called [Kickstand](#).***

Most recently, this collective effort has landed approval from [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\)](#) to establish a statewide EB-5 (Employment Base) Regional Center called Invest Idaho, which will serve as a financial resource platform for economic growth projects in Idaho's 44 counties. The Invest Idaho Regional Center will provide access to financial resources through direct foreign investment as part of the Governor's [Project 60](#) Program, which strives to grow Idaho's gross domestic product to \$60 billion.

[Idaho TechConnect](#) CEO and President Rick Ritter outlined the new Invest Idaho Regional Center to about 40 businesspeople during a recent INL-sponsored business networking meeting called Kickstand.

"Invest Idaho is the first program in the nation to focus on funding economic growth projects in technology, research and education through foreign investment," Ritter said.

Congress created the pilot EB-5 Immigrant Investor visa program in 1993. It permits the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service to designate regional centers and grant "Alien Entrepreneurs" permanent U.S. residency in exchange for investing \$1 million in urban areas or \$500,000 in rural or targeted employment areas that will create at least 10 jobs per investment over a 24-month period.

"We are encouraged by the selection of Invest Idaho as a regional investment center and look forward to working with Idaho economic development professionals, elected officials and the citizens of Idaho to encourage and facilitate economic growth that benefits the entire state," Ritter said.

Ritter said South Korea, China, United Kingdom and Latin America may be promising places to look to elicit initial investors as likely locations to focus on for first investment opportunities. More information can be found at www.fundthefrontier.com.

"For several decades, INL has sponsored key economic building organizations and activities, including business education for entrepreneurs and college students," Bergmann said. She added that INL has partnerships with dozens of regional organizations, including the 100-member [Idaho Economic Development Association](#) and the [Idaho Rural Partnership](#).

Kickstand is an INL-sponsored forum for regional businesspeople, new entrepreneurs and those interested in the intellectual property available from INL for commercialization. It meets the third Thursday of each month. Registration is available at [the Kickstand Web site](#).

Idaho Economic Development Links

Project 60: <http://commerce.idaho.gov/business/project-60.aspx>

Idaho TechConnect: <http://www.idahotechconnect.com/>

Idaho Economic Development Association: <http://ieda.biz/>

Idaho Rural Partnership: <http://irp.idaho.gov/>

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